

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2454

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

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SUBJ: POLITICAL IMPACT IN KABUL OF PRESIDENT DAOUD'S IRAN VISIT

REF: TEHRAN 3867

1. SUMMARY: IN ADDITION TO ECONOMIC BENEFITS WHICH ARE EXPECTED TO DERIVE FROM PRESIDENT DAOUD'S STATE VISIT TO IRAN APRIL 26-30, THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL EFFECT OF THE VISIT WAS FAVORABLE. THIS WAS NOT A FOREGONE CONCLUSION, FOR THIS PUSHTUN DOMINATED NATION REMAINS WARY OF ITS PERSIAN SPEAKING, SHI'A NEIGHBOR. THIS IS PROBABLY ALL THE TRUER GIVEN IRAN'S NEWLY GAINED GREAT WEALTH AND WORLD STATURE. DAOUD APPEARS TO HAVE PLAYED THE PROPERLY INDEPENDENT AFGHAN-PUSHTUN LEADER WHO CAN ACCEPT DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE AND THE HOSPITALITY OF A FAR RICHER HEAD OF STATE WITHOUT LOSING ANY OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF PRICE WHICH MUST CHARACTERIZE AN ACCEPTABLE AFGHAN LEADER. END SUMMARY.

2. WHILE THE MAJOR NEWS OF PRESIDENT DAOUD'S APRIL 26-30 VISIT TO IRAN INVOLVES THE ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF THE TRIP (SEPTEL), POLITICAL ATMOSPHERICS IN KABUL ARE ALSO WORTH NOTING. NO CONFIDENTIAL

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PRESIDENTIAL VISIT SINCE DAOUD'S TRIP TO MOSCOW LAST YEAR

HAS BEEN AS POLITICALLY SENSITIVE OR EMOTIONALLY HIGHLY CHARGED FOR AFGHANS AS PRESIDENT DAOUD'S MEETING WITH THE SHAH. PRESIDENT DAOUD IS HIMSELF A PUSHTUN WHOSE MAIN CONSTITUENCY IS THE NUMEROUS, AND TRADITIONALLY ASCENDENT PUSHTUNS. AS THIS GROUP LOOKS EAST NOR WEST FOR ITS RACIAL, CULTURAL AND HISTORIC BONDS, PUSHTUNS ARE UNEASY WITH TALK OF CLOSE TIES UNITING IRAN AND AFGHAN PEOPLES AND WERE SUSPICIOUS AND UNCERTAIN ABOUT PROSPECTS OF DAOUD'S MEETING WITH SHAH. AS PUSHTUNS ARE SUNNIS OF CONSERVATIVE BENT, TRADITIONAL SUSPICION OF SHI'AS REINFORCED THIS ATTITUDE. ON OTHER HAND ATTITUDE TOWARD VISIT OF NON-PUSHTUNS, INCLUDING THE SHI'A HAZARAS, WAS GENERALLY POSITIVE AND HOPEFUL.

3. DAOUD'S STATEMENTS ON BONDS BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN AND IRAN SHOULD BE SEEN IN LIGHT OF THESE ATTITUDES. WHILE HE DID SPEAK OF BROTHERLY TIES WITH IRAN, HIS STATEMENT CAME NOWHERE CLOSE TO THE SHAH'S REMARKS AT APRIL 27 BANQUET THAT "CLOSEST RACIAL, LANGUAGE, RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL TIES HAVE DEEPLY BOUND US." INDEED DAOUD USED SUCH PHRASES ONLY WHEN DISCUSSING AFGHAN DIFFERENCES WITH PAKISTAN, SPEAKING OF "INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF BROTHERS WHO HAVE UNBREAKABLE TRADITIONAL, RACIAL, CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL BONDS WITH US." USUAL GOA FORMULA IS, OF COURSE, "PUSHTUN AND BALUCH BROTHERS".

4. WHILE CEREMONIAL WELCOME AND TREATMENT OF DAOUD MAY HAVE BEEN THAT ORDINARILY GIVEN TO HEADS OF STATE, KABUL MEJBA HAS DWELT ON WARMTH AND WELCOME, EXTENSIVE COVERAGE IN IRANIAN MEDIA, AND MINUTIAE OF EXCURSIONS OUTSIDE OF TEHRAN. DAOUD'S SPEECH IN HERAT (KABUL NIERLN AN AFGHAN CITY WHICH MOST STRONGLY FEELS THE CULTURAL PULL OF IRAN, REFLECTS NOT ONLY AFGHAN CULTURAL AND ETHNIC SENSITIVITIES BUT PERHAPS ALSO SOME DISCOMFITURE ON DAOUD'S PART AS HIS PERSONAL AUSTERITY CONTRASTS WITH THE LAVISHNESS OF HIS TREATMENT IN TEHRAN. DAOUD CHOSE TO STRESS AFGHAN UNIQUENESS AND SELF-RELIANCE, NEED FOR SACRIFICE, AND, NOT LEAST, THAT HIS RECEPTION IN TEHRAN WAS NOT FOR HIM AS AN INDIVIDUAL, BUT AS REPRESENTATIVE OF AFGHAN PEOPLE.

5. MEASURED AGAINST CONFLICTING AFGHAN ETHNIC SENSITIVITIES AND EXAGGERATED SUSPICIONS AND HOPES PRIOR TO TRIP, DAOUD'S CONFIDENTIAL

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MEETING WITH THE SHAH WAS A SUCCESS. SHI'A MINORITIES HERE TAKE COMFORT IN THE BETTERMENT OF RELATIONS WITH IRAN, WHILE INITIAL FEEDBACK FROM KABUL PUSHTUNS INDICATES APPROVAL OF DAOUD'S STATEMENT ON RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN AND UNDERSTANDING THAT IRANIAN SENSITIVITIES MITIGATED AGAINST USE OF STANDARD FORMULATION. SIMILARLY WELL RECEIVED WERE SHAH'S STATEMENTS THAT RADIO IRAN WOULD BEGIN PUSHTU SERVICE, AND THAT PUSHTU WOULD BE ADDED TO UNIVERSITY OF MESHED SYLLABUS. MOST AFGHANS,

EASILY GIVEN TO POOR COUSIN SYNDROME IN REGARD TO IRAN,
APPEAR TO FEEL THAT SHAH'S TREATMENT OF DAOUD AND THE PRESIDENT'S
COMPORTMENT IN IRAN WERE CONSISTENT WITH, OR HAVE ENHANCED,
AFGHAN DIGNITY AND NATIONAL HONOR.

6. WE HOPE IN NEXT FEW DAYS TO LEARN SOMETHING OF TALKS BETWEEN
DAOUD AND SHAH ON SUCH MATTERS AS PAK-AFGHAN RELATIONS.

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